

There is no higher calling than the invitation of our Savior. “Follow Me.” It is a call for volunteers from among those who respond to His love. He never represented this as an easy path. It is a noble path of spending our lives for God and being workers together with Him. (1 Corinthians 3:9).

The Motivation

The French have an interesting phrase: *noblesse oblige*. It means that high position brings an implied obligation to responsible behavior. A behavior which must be generous and honorable beyond the normal. For believers this high position is our calling in Christ. It obliges us to live our lives in a manner worthy of our calling in God (2 Thessalonians 1:11). Some believers may choose to enjoy God’s forgiveness and eternal life with little sense of responsibility toward our Lord’s concerns for the lost, and the need for help in the Body of Christ. Those who live this kind of selfish lifestyle will not experience the measure of spiritual growth that they may see in others.

“...we have not ceased to pray for you
...that you may walk in a manner worthy of
the Lord, to please Him in all respects...”

The highest motivation in serving Christ is that we love Him because He first demonstrated love to us. That kind of love governs devoted believers who have died to the idea of living for themselves that they might rather live for Him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). God’s love should stir us so strongly that we might not say, “I will serve whenever I feel like it.” If a believer does not love the Lord to the extent of being willing to sacrifice his own interests for the Lord’s interests, then he should not be “drafted” into grudging service.

The Misconceptions

The argument on behalf of doing **what** we please, **when** we please, **if** we please, is sometimes based on the idea that we are now free and no longer in

bondage. After all, Jesus said, “If the Son of Man shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). Another favorite text is Galatians 5:1– “it was for freedom that Christ set us free, therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to the yoke of bondage.” Salvation is free. Some people feel that therefore they are free to do whatever they feel inclined to do, according to their notions of God’s leading. They also feel free of responsibilities. They suggest, “If you don’t feel like it, don’t do it – and don’t feel guilty about it.” This may mean rejecting Scriptural disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, giving to support God’s work and fellowshiping with other believers. Some may exercise their freedom to use the Lord’s Day for their own pleasure or convenience instead of using it for regular meetings of the church for worship, ministry, evangelistic

outreach and help with needs in the Body. Those who **do** feel this obligation, both in the light of Scripture and because of sensitivity to

Christ, are seen as bound by legalism. Those who criticize them may say, “**We** are free from such bondage.”

Is this a Scriptural understanding of what it means to be free? Christ has made us free both from the penalty and the power of sin (Romans 6:6-7). The believer is freed from the requirements of the law of Moses as a means of righteousness (Romans 7:3, 4; Galatians 3:13). Our righteousness for acceptance by God in salvation is provided by Christ, not our works. The Christian, being freed from bondage to sin, is now free to serve and please God.

Spiritual freedom does not mean that we are free from the calling to obey the Lord or His Word. This glorious freedom has made us “slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:18). Every believer is Christ’s bondservant (1 Corinthians 7:22), which is far from being free to selfishly do one’s own thing. Obedience to Christ is a

mark of our love for Him, and is an indicator that our salvation experience is real (1 John 2:3-5). True freedom and liberty is found when we obey God and do the things that please God. If a child disobeys his father, he displeases his father. The only way he can please his father is by obeying him. The true child of God ought never to consider obeying the commandments of the Lord to be a burden (1 John 5:3).

What About Christian Liberty?

The scriptures tell us that we have the liberty to differ with other believers in things which are morally neutral (Romans 14). In exercising our freedom, we must not have the attitude of judging others opinions or trying to enforce our own ideas in these areas of moral indifference. Moreover, we are not free to eat, drink or do anything that might be a cause for stumbling another believer (Romans 14:21). We must use this freedom as the bondsman of God (1 Peter 3:16), not as a license for self-indulgence, especially if it is a stumbling block to others (1 Corinthians 8:8-9). Christian liberty must never become carnal license.

Doing What The Lord Pleases

The Word of God gives ample support to the idea that we shouldn't live selfish lives, but rather should seek to please others before ourselves. God has revealed Himself as one who expects fruitfulness and accountability from His people. These themes are repeated and emphasized many times throughout the whole of the Bible. Some ideas for careful, personal consideration are as follows:

- As a believer, **I am not my own**. I am owned by another. My body, my life is for the purpose of glorifying God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). He paid for my life at the cross. Because I am His, I have an obligation to serve Him.
- God has made me a manager of all that I have; including my life, possessions, talents, gifts and

opportunities (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Luke 12:42). Many of the parables which Jesus taught to His disciples emphasize God's mandate to be diligent and hard working managers for Him. The Lord's teaching often emphasized the need for His followers to be engaged in a life of profitable service. A clean heart is wrought by keeping the commandments of God and doing the things that please God. If we are going to please God, we must obey God.

- We cannot avoid the command to serve and obey the Lord by appealing to our own sense of personal freedom. We are free to please God!
- I will answer to Christ for the use of my life and opportunities down here. This can mean eternal gain or loss (1 Corinthians 3:15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The Lord Himself will evaluate my life and service, and I will be held accountable for how I have used the resources He entrusted to me. It is a daily obedience in the small things of life, not just the large decisions
- I am called upon to please God and not man. If a conflict occurs, in which it seems that I must choose between pleasing men and pleasing God, it is better to choose the latter. Although I am to be motivated by the desire to please Christ, this does not mean that it is always wrong to please others. These ideas need not be mutually exclusive.

In summary, let's love and serve God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. We shouldn't undermine this commandment by appealing to our freedom to do whatever we please as long as it is not in itself sinful. Remember the admonition, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7). It is important to seek this godly discipline, even when it rubs against our camouflaged forms of selfishness or pride. - *FBC Elders*